

## WILDLIFE CONSERVATION

## Grazing in National Parks

A bill (H.R. 5058) introduced in the United States Congress by Congressman Clair Engle of California on June 19, 1944, is intended: "To provide for the issuance of grazing permits for livestock in the national parks and monuments." The bill proposes that ". . . until the cessation of hostilities in the present war as determined by proclamation of the President or concurrent resolution of the Congress, and for a period of six months thereafter, all national parks and national monuments shall be open to grazing of livestock and permits shall be issued for grazing of livestock therein, any statute, policy, or regulation to the contrary notwithstanding. The Secretary of the Interior is hereby directed to issue such permits. The area in all national parks and monuments to be subject to grazing, the conditions under which such grazing is to occur, and the length of time each year of such grazing, shall be determined jointly by the Secretary of the Interior and the Secretary of Agriculture. It shall be the responsibility of the Secretary of Agriculture to represent the applicants for such grazing permits and the national interest in increased food production."

This proposal is contrary to the basic purposes and policies established by the Congress relative to the national parks and monuments. These policies were reiterated early in the war by the Secretary of the Interior, as follows: "The National Park Service will continue to hold grazing to a minimum and eventually eliminate it from the national parks. Grazing will not be extended or increased in the major scenic areas where it is now being carried on by permits inherited when the areas were established. Concessions authorizing grazing may be issued in the discretion of the Director, as a wartime emergency measure to meet critical demands for food and fiber in certain types of areas such as historical units wherein livestock may have historical significance and recreational areas where it does not interfere with human use."

It has been the policy of the National Park Service to permit stockmen who held privileges at the time of park establishment to continue grazing their stock in these areas until they retire from the business. This avoids undue hardship to individuals and provides an automatic method of eliminating livestock from park areas. Livestock grazing has been provided in 43 National Park areas, totaling 1,300,000 acres. It was estimated, in 1942, that these areas furnished forage to 20,000 cattle, 74,000 sheep, more than 1,500 horses and several thousand head of pack and saddle stock. Early in 1943 an increase of 20 per cent in cattle and 10 per cent in sheep grazing was authorized, as a contribution to the war effort, in several historic areas and marginal sections of certain parks.

This relaxation of normal standards apparently has not provided sufficient appeasement for some livestock interests, which continue to press for additional privileges. The proposed legislation is apparently aimed at providing these added privileges by directing that existing policies be discarded and the decision as to how much grazing should be permitted in the national parks be made jointly by the Secretary of the Interior and the Secretary of Agriculture. The Secretary of Agriculture is specifically directed to represent applicants for grazing permits.

The importance of increased food production is almost everywhere appreciated at this time, but there is danger that in our efforts to expedite food production irreparable damage may be done to certain national interests. This is particularly applicable to grazing in national parks.

Grazing means the selective elimination of interesting and valuable parts of the native flora and often an unnatural encouragement of thorny and unpalatable plants. It carries with it the threat of reduced cover for many native animals, increased foraging competition for our native herbivores, and long-term damage to shrubs and young trees. If America is to preserve these natural areas as a part

of its heritage, its great national parks and monuments should no more be turned into pastures for steers than the Lincoln Memorial be used as a garage for jeeps.

The first question that conservationists are likely to raise concerning this proposed legislation is whether it may be used as an entering wedge to secure continued grazing of national parks and monuments after war.—C.A.D.

### Waterfowl

The Fish and Wildlife Service in a recent news release reported an increase of nearly 400 per cent in the population of game species of migratory waterfowl in North America during the past nine years. The estimated population is 125,350,000 birds. This is a considerable rise from the low point during the years 1934-35 when the population was estimated at approximately 27,000,000. The largest increase is reported in Mallards and Pintails. Third place is given to Scaups (Greater and Lesser together). Redheads, Baldpates, and Black Ducks are said to follow in that order. It is believed that Canvas-backs and Ruddy Ducks also increased but that Gadwalls, Green-winged and Blue-winged Teal, Ring-necked Ducks, and Shovellers decreased to some extent. Populations of geese are said to have exhibited no important changes.

The 1944 waterfowl regulations have been liberalized on the basis of this report and evidence of crop damage by ducks. The new regulations provide an open season of 80 days instead of the 70-day season of recent years. They permit also the taking of Redheads and Buffleheads in the legal bag of 10 ducks. An additional bag of 5 Mallards, Widgeons, and Pintails singly or in the aggregate may be taken. The daily bag limit on geese remains at 2 except that 4 Blue or Snow Geese may be taken singly or in the aggregate in the Pacific coast states. Except for Snow Geese in Idaho, 3 Montana counties, and on the Atlantic coast, these regulations apply elsewhere in the country. In issuing these regulations the Director of the Fish and Wildlife Service stated that "... the present liberalized bag is an effort to so scatter and control these species that agricultural losses may be cut down. It is purely a temporary expedient and the extra bag limit will be permitted only long enough to alleviate the present crop-damage situation."

Another regulation provides for a bag of 25 American and Red-breasted Mergansers singly or in the aggregate. This is due to reports that they are becoming so abundant as to constitute a menace to fish production.—C.A.D.

### Conservation Education for Rural Leaders

The 4-H Club conservation camps that are held annually in 28 mid-western and eastern states constitute an educational program about which little is known outside of agricultural circles. The objective of these camps is to bring together for a week of training in conservation older farm boys and girls who show outstanding promise as leaders in their home communities. The present year marks the tenth anniversary of these camps.

The program presented varies in different states but is directed in all cases to give a well-rounded picture of conservation problems from a national, state, and local point of view. In the Ohio camp, for example, the subjects of human, soil, water, forest, wildlife, and habitat conservation are given major consideration. Elective activities offered are designed to give training in outdoor living. These include: safe use of firearms, swimming, archery, photography, bait casting, bird hikes, and nature study.

In recent years 35 such camps have regularly been held in 28 states. Between 3,500 and 4,000 rural youth attend them each year. The camps are directed by the agricultural extension service in the states and partly financed by Charles L. Horn of Minneapolis.—C.A.D.

**Status of the Whooping Crane**

The overlooked status of the Whooping Crane continues to be one of the most appalling aspects of bird protection today. Although migration counts are not an accurate index of population, we view with apprehension the trend in spring numbers of this species in Nebraska since 1934:

1934—134+	1939— 11
1935— 40±	1940— 31
1936— 82	1941— 3
1937— 64	1942— 3
1938— 49	1943— 1

During the past spring Whooping Cranes were reported as follows. On March 10 a flock of 15 seen by George Eggleston near Kearney, Nebraska. Additional records of presumably the same birds were made in the same region on March 12 (flock of 12) and April 2 (group of 3). In Saskatchewan 8 were seen on May 1, and 10 on May 11 by J. K. Wiebe at Amiens; 7 on May 13 by W. G. Karstad at Pontrilas; and one on May 10 by C. S. Francis at Torch River.

It is worth noting that the fine protection afforded Whooping Cranes on the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge in Texas has successfully sustained one remnant of the crane population, but this remnant has not significantly changed in numbers within the past 5 years. Philip A. DuMont, R. E. Griffith, and J. O. Stevenson of the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service report these maximum numbers:

<i>Winter</i>	<i>Adults</i>	<i>Young of the year</i>
1938-39	10	4
1939-40	16	6
1940-41	21	5
1941-42	13	2
1942-43	15	4
1943-44	16	5

What practical help can be given the Whooping Crane at this eleventh hour? The species' breeding grounds are virtually unknown; its wintering areas are apparently limited. Before special protection can be rendered in the field, a careful survey and census of both regions are needed. Louisiana was surveyed last winter when Robert Smith of the Fish and Wildlife Service made an airplane check-up on waterfowl. Mexico will be covered during the next two years by A. S. Leopold. Texas, including the King Ranch, still needs a careful census. It can be made quickly and efficiently by plane. Because the crane is in some regions still famed for the value of its meat, refuges should—if possible—be set up wherever additional birds are found in winter. Possible, although not necessarily practical, is a special patrol like that provided for the Blue Goose to follow the crane on its migration. The flight of the crane north appears to be a leisurely one, and perhaps without particular danger; but its migrations south must be subject to the vagaries of early hunters and may involve hunting losses. In recent years Game Management Agent C. L. Licking, who has headquarters in Nebraska, has been instructed by the Fish and Wildlife Service to give this species special attention. Last spring Licking was handicapped by gasoline rationing and he could not follow the birds.

In Canada somewhat parallel measures could be undertaken. It would be worth some effort to ascertain whether nesting cranes are molested by Indians and to insure their safe flight over the guns of persons who shoot at every flying thing that is big.—A. M. Brooking and J. J. Hickey.